Northwick Lodge
Harrow on the Hill,
Middlesex, England

13th December 1963

Dearest René

Thank you very much for yr letter received a couple of days or so ago. Glad we got the CAPES business right at last. I thought Catherine would take some little while in replying. It turns out fr her letter that ~~[illegible]~~ her baby has been born, I had understood it was not to be born until just after Xmas. It is a boy and they are all alright. — I mean she & the baby & her husband, Henri.

I shall look out ~~for~~ in Tablet for yr review of thingamejig's book on the Crusades. I read yr ~~[illegible]~~ review last week on ~~[illegible]~~ the reproductions of Eric's thousand & one Engraved nights. Yes, reading between the lines of your review I got the impression that they weren't well printed. It's all very interesting how all these things hang together. The whole feel of the thing evaporates if the paper is not exactly the right kind, the pressure right ~~etc~~, etc: I was comparing some modern reproductions of old Bewick's blocks for his ~~[illegible]~~ Hist. of Quadrupeds with the original printing of them in the 1791 edtn. which I bought in a second-hand book shop here ten years ago — and God! the difference was unbelievable. Bloody impossible to explain to anybody who didn't feel the difference — quite well printed — everything there — not over-inked but wholly without the quality & feel of the originals.*

To-day is the publication date for the Faber paper-back of I.P. — the one minus the illustrations mentioned in my last moaning letter, but with nearly the correct text. Yes, I can't get over them continuing to print four ~~edition~~ separate impressions since 1937 without an alteratn

* And even in the best modern printing ~~they~~ they don't seem to get that feeling of pressure — the things look as if they are merely on the surface of the paper. In the old ones they are pressed into the paper & feel part of it. This is especially essential in the case of copper engravings. I'm a bit worried about that re. these new edtn of The Ancient Mariner. Bit feeble, somehow, the proofs I've seen, look, compared with the 1929 ones.

P.S. Monday, Dec 16th.
Sorry for all this endless stuff. No need for an answer. Just went on as my thoughts came to me — it's all of no importance, but may as well put it in an envelope & send it.
D.

②

to make corrections. I wonder where the fault really is. It's so bloody embarrassing. I said to the chap ~~who~~ with whom I deal over the production, 'How is it possible that errors listed five, or ~~te~~ even ten, years ~~ago~~ ago have not been corrected until 1961?' and he said, 'Yes it is odd, is it it, Tom E. says how the same errors crop up again & again.' — Well, I mean, that's no bloody answer, is it? I don't understand it. *

* When chaps are so jolly ~~difficult~~ nice it's all the ~~more~~ more difficult — for example I complained some long time back that the Frontispiece to I.P. had got much paler since the original printing in 1937. And they said, 'Well, it's impossible to do anything ~~about~~ that!' (owing to some technical reason, I've forgotten what) yet when in 1961 they issued that special limited edition, there it was back again in its original depth — so it appears ~~that~~ what was said before was just balls — a lie in fact, which I don't like coming from nice chaps.

It's terribly cold here now, snowed a bit this A.M. and a ghastly chill feeling in whole air — just like last year's stuff started.

Yes, it was kind of that ~~chap~~ round, eye-glassed, Welsh Major to head me off from the Welsh Horse, but in a way I'm sorry, for I was only eighteen then & could have survived the trials I expect; ~~I~~ then should have been able to ride, one of ~~the very~~ few physical accomplishment ambitions I've ever had! On the other hand I don't know what happens to them — I mean the unit raised as 'The Welsh Horse' — perhaps they were absorbed into some other unit — don't know. The only ~~cavalry~~ mounted regiment listed in the Order of Battle of the 38th (Welsh) Division was 'D' Squadron, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry & they were withdrawn to their own Regiment in ~~[illegible]~~ May 1916. Presumably to become part of the Cavalry ~~divisions~~ forces waiting to advance had we been successful on the Somme Offensive of July 1916. But as that turns out to be a balls-up and no break through was made, no cavalry ~~were~~ came into action. ✗ It would be rather interesting to know on what occasions cavalry were used ~~[illegible]~~ or at all on the West-Front after 1914. I know ~~they~~ were used at the Battle of Cambrai in ~~Nov~~ Nov 1917, when infantry with ~~[illegible]~~ tanks ✗ were used & there was quite a bit of an advance, but only for a ~~[illegible]~~ few days, because old Jerry counter-attacks from both flanks & I believe captured Divisional Staff officers in their pyjamas — at least that was the ~~the~~ kind of tale we heard.

What a strange thing it all is, this military stuff seen in retrospect. ~~For~~ For example, I believe the original plan for Cambrai was quite sensible — it was intended to make a big morale-Breaking raid with tanks & infantry & cavalry, do as much damage as possible and break off the action within 48 hours, * it was not intended to hold the ground ~~[illegible]~~ penetrated; for one thing there were no reserves, other than a few horse-troops, and the creation of a deep ~~but~~ narrow salient was the

~~[illegible]~~

✗ see ~~[illegible]~~ I.P. (part 6) page, 143, the C.S.M of 'D' lost his hundred francs.'

✗ It is sometimes thought that tanks were first used at this battle, but that is not so. They had been used with very little effect in our attacks towards Passchendaele in July–August 1917. They were first used on the Somme in Sept. 1916, near Morval & Flers — I was then peacefully at Shipston-on-Stour until that bloody Scots doctor discharged me for going to tea with my heavenly nurse. It's odd how you never forgive people. Well, it was his daughter's bloody fault for betraying us.

'I'm sure you meant no harm, but you've broken the rules of this establishment, I therefore have no alternative etc. etc.'

'Your wound has healed nicely, you were lucky ~~that~~ neither the tibia nor fibula were fractured etc.

* This I believe was explicitly stated in written orders. That was the maximum time limit set.

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least desirable thing. There could be no reserves because ~~[illegible]~~ the Passchendaele offensive was still in progress, or rather not in progress at all, but stuck fast after near 3 months continuous fighting; it began on July 30th and it was now sometime in Oct. when the Cambrai ~~[illegible]~~ raid was planned. Yet, instead of sticking to the plan of an engagement not exceeding 48 hrs they suddenly decided to hold the ground gained & in fact to do everything they had decided not to do. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ I've never read an official or unofficial account of the reasons for this bloody silly change, which caused the thing to be turned from a brilliant success as a raid, into the inevitable disaster which the 'Battle of Cambrai' eventually ~~[illegible]~~ became. A beautiful salient, with no reserves whatever ~~to~~ to hold it, & ~~[illegible]~~ old Jerry with hundreds of fresh Divisions (the Russian Front having already collapsed) available ~~[illegible]~~ for use as he pleased. As old Tap saith 'Do be reasonable' and Aut quis rex ..... non sedens prius cogitat, si possit cum decem millibus occurrere ei qui cum viginti millibus venit ad se? And the bugger of it was they had 'just sat down & considered' and then acted quite contrary to what they had decided. The attack ~~started~~ on the morning of Nov 20th & had by the 21st done the job, but then the change in orders came & the exhausted troops had to hold fast, but ~~by~~ by Dec. 6th the German counter-attacks had not only wiped out nearly all the ground taken, but on our ~~left~~ right flank had penetrated some miles beyond the original British line.* ~~[illegible]~~

I was miles north of all that, in the very quiet sector south of Armentieres, called the Bois Grenier Sector. We came there from the Passchendaele offensive ~~&~~ from being eleven months in the Ypres salient & the quiet was almost uncanny — hardly a shot fired for ~~days~~ days on end, just a bit of artillery but it hotted up later; strange to say old Sretty had been in Bois Grenier at some period years & years ~~[illegible]~~ before 1914.

Sunday Dec 15th

Tom unexpectedly appeared yesterday afternoon which was jolly nice, he was not able to stay long, about 1½ hrs he came, he had to go back take Mabel out to dinner somewhere. He'd just come back from Rome & was extremely interesting about the Council & the chaps he met there. He met Bernard in Rome too & Bobby S. and he looks very well.* It was awfully nice seeing him again.

He's a wonderful chap, dear Tom, amazing buoyancy of spirit just as he's always had. In spite of all that business world he's never lost his perception — or his cheerfulness. It's extraordinary. I think he wanted to get in touch with you something about Chardin. I gave him your full address in Eire.

Harman also came one day last week but only for about 20 mins because he had to go back to his office. He came to ask me about a thing. He was alright & it was lovely seeing him — though the time was ~~very~~ very short. Yes, he may possibly be ~~[illegible]~~ leaving the Corporation, but it isn't public yet & nothing is certain. My Valerie* came to lunch a little back, on ~~the~~ 27th Nov., & stayed till about 6 P.M. when she had to go back to her little daughter Anna & her husband who has been in London for most of November on business, & she came up for a few days. It was heavenly seeing her that week. & talking with her again, after all this long time.

* I'm sure she goes to the hair-dressers too often — they ruin the lustrous quality of it. Her hair used to be so naturally springy & glossy-black with a slight tinge of warm reddishness in certain lights & now it's got a duller texture & I'm sure it's these bloody hair-dressers. They use all sorts of chemicals that ruin the native splendour. But it's no good, you can't persuade these girls that that is so.

She wanted me to go back with them to stay a bit in Wales & also to go to Ireland to see you; neither of which can I do.

I'm so glad about the classes in Old Irish at the University of Cork — I thought you'd get on to that before long.

④

I expect with your skill in languages, you'll get it all taped in no time. What do they call 'Old Irish' in Gaelic or Goidelic or Erse or whatever the word used? In Welsh Old Irish is Hên Gwyddeleg — ~~they is~~ the adjective in W. is usually after the noun but in the case of 'old,' hên, it frequently precedes the noun — Old English, i.e. Anglo-Saxon is Hên Saesneg & Old Cornish is Hên Cernyweg, whereas Middle Irish would be Gwyddeleg Canol and Middle English Saesneg Canol. ~~and Middlesex~~ and Middlesex Tir Saisson Canol. the Land of the Middle Saxons. The word tir ~~is~~ is the same in Irish as in Welsh — well, of course hundreds ~~of~~ words ~~there are lots of course~~, are the same, but usually a good bit hidden by spelling & whatnot, but in this case it's exactly the same. It's interesting that the Welsh name for Ireland is Iwerddon, but for an Irishman, Gwyddel. I used to know why this was, but have forgotten. I liked the story about the Archbishop of Dublin. I told it to Tom who roared with laughter. Biro won't work. Wonder how Rosalind made them work — magic I suppose. Found a new one that does now. Yes, awful about the chaps names & amounts for the Masses for the departed. They used to do something of that sort at Brockley I remember, because I complained to the French priest about it (a heavenly chap he was) and he said that if the names etc were not announced then chaps complained — so I ~~dont~~ didn't know what to think. But of course you'd get the full weight of that particular 'Irish Catholic' thing there. It's strange & hard to define. Curiously mechanistic &, in a way, materialistic — almost as removed in feeling from what one thinks of as 'Celtic' as is Scots' presbyterianism or Welsh Calvinism, only in quite a different form. ~~th~~ Yes, interesting about the 200 martyrs, & no Beatifications, I don't understand about that. As regards the de-Catholocizing of the Irish Gentry & Co. — well its becoming more plain to me that that's how it was done in England & Wales also. The fines for recusancy over a long period really did the trick more than anything else. Actual martyrs~~s~~ were comparatively not numerous. I know that in Wales there is evidence of the gradual pressure & the 'new men' or, ~~avowed~~ at all events avowed, Protestant belief, getting on top. As I should say that most — by far the most chaps, (except in London & ~~more~~ the eastern parts of England & some other areas, in patches) 'remained Catholic' right on well into the 17th Century, but went to the parish church from time to time to keep inside the law. After all, to remain a Catholic was not like some heroic gesture for which you were punished once or twice but more often like not paying your income tax to-day — something of that sort. Well, awfully few people, of whatever status, can defy the law indefinitely. Very rich chaps ~~payed~~ paid recusancy fines until all their lands & everything faded away. And one can imagine the second or third generation of such families, saying, well this is no bloody good at all, and ~~conform~~ conforming. It's rather interesting, ~~but~~ I believe west of a line drawn

The English language is Saesneg
but an Englishman is a Sais
pl Saisson.

there are of course other words gwlad, bro, ~~[illegible]~~ daear, but as tir is the same in Irish & Welsh it suggests that it is a very very ancient Common Celtic form — don't know.

Daear is used more of ~~this~~ earth as in the Welsh pater noster. ~~[illegible]~~ ar y ddaear megis yn y nef, 'on the earth as in the heaven'

I wouldn't be surprised if in some places they (the government) liked to have a number of recusants because that would mean steady additional ~~[illegible]~~ revenue. — a most convenient form of taxation. I bet they were up to every sort of trick of that sort.

(5)

from, say, Wiltshire ~~[illegible]~~ north-east to Yorkshire there were ~~very~~ few indeed sent to the stake as Protestant martyrs during the burnings under Mary, whereas there were many, many hundreds east & south of that line who suffered. Only ~~three~~ in Wales, Bishop Farrar (an Englishman) of St Davids, & a chap called Rawlins White at Cardiff & Nicol at Haverfordwest. and yet when Eliz. reversed the situation there were ~~no Welsh Cath~~ very few Welsh Cath. martyrs either — and then only later on, when the Jesuit mission priests came in — and the effect ~~[illegible]~~ seems to have been more in the borderlands of Wales than in the deep fastnesses* — but there ~~are~~ all kinds of evidence to show ~~that~~ the people were untouched by by the New Religion, but conformed by attendance at the Parish Church as required by law — especially in the few towns such as Beaumaris or Bangor I suppose, or when the new gentry were vigilant to enforce the law or possibly were sometimes convinced protestants — but the evidence is very scanty.* What is more interesting is later, quite late in the 17th Cent– ~~[illegible]~~ all that Abergavenny district & Monmouthshire– East Breconshire & up quite north on the Welsh-English border Catholic recusants were in fairly large numbers. I was reading of a either book or a Welsh ~~[illegible]~~ Catholic family in the Aber – Hay area holding offices of various sorts under the Crown, but paying recusancy fines & sometimes in jug — the other half of the family protestant — all kinds of curious contradictions — I've forgotten, but it was right towards the end of the 17th Cent. And then the case of William Byrd the great composer, organist at Lincoln Cathedral & then at the Chapel Royal under Eliz. &, ~~[illegible]~~ as an old man, under James I. & called by Eliz. herself "a stiff Papist" but ~~[illegible]~~ continuously listed as a recusant, but survived untouched. He was born in Henry VIII's reign & served through the whole period of the Reformation. I'm sure it was all much more complex for a much longer period than most people think.* Also it worked depending on either real or cooked-up political scares of one sort or another, such as the Gunpowder Plot or ~~the~~ some threat from abroad, just as things do now — even to little, local, silly affairs e.g. 'Berlin Road' near Brockley, in 1914 name-plate ripped off and 'Canada Avenue' substituted, after the solemn deliberation of the local Urban Borough Council or L.C.C. or what not.

*that is generally speaking. ~~The~~ It was patchy. There was a cave somewhere in Caernarvonshire or Anglesey where Catholics had a either printing-press & printed Welsh versions of books of devotion etc. They were eventually found, but they must have had the protection of local chaps; for every nook & cranny was being searched by Government agents & informers.

Of course Wales is not a good example because owing to the crazy adulation of the Welsh gentry & others for the blasted Tudors, I suppose they would have become, or pretended to become, Moslems or any old thing if the Tudors had told 'em to! Thomas Cromwell (himself of a Welsh family, Williams) had anticipated there or half expected there would be grave trouble in Wales over the initial Reformational movements, the Dissolution of the Monasteries & the imposition of new doctrine, but there was none at all. They took it like lambs. In fact the Welsh gentry jumped at the chance of getting the monastic lands, — well, for that matter so did the Catholic English gentry. Mary cowed everybody from a London shop-keeper to an archbishop for heresy but was unable to restore a yard of church land, as far as I can make out — with some minor exceptions I think the Bridgittine convent of Syon House, Isleworth was one such.

*It is but fair to note that already, in the 15th Century, the monastic houses in Wales were in an extraordinary state. Abbots openly marrying & even handing on the priory to their sons & in other cases, Strata Florida for example, the abbey lands were farmed out to laymen, so that at the Dissolution in 1536 lay persons were already in possession of much of the property.

So Tom are thinking of driving to Mount ~~[illegible]~~ Melleray for Midnight Mass. What are they, Cistercians? It sounds a bit of a way. I've not been to Midnight Mass for, I don't know when — not for twelve years anyway — or maybe I did once here but I don't think so. Ah yes, hares, I wonder if it's mixed up with a remote leave-over from Celtic antiquity — does not Caesar mention the or if I'm wrong and J. Caesar, I know he says that the hare was sacred to the Celts.

hare as sacred to the Celts? — the Brittonic Celts anyway — I can't find the passage, but I'm sure he does.* I wonder what a hare is called in Irish, it's called ysgyfarnog in Welsh ~~and~~ ~~some~~ also ~~[illegible]~~ sometimes ceinach, but ysgyfarnog is the one I've always remembered — they shorten it to swarnog I think, usually, ~~sometimes~~ — I can't imagine why I remember it — for I usually have to look in the dictionary to be sure, or to know how to spell it — but ysgyfarnog sticks — it has a ~~peculiar~~ plural -od ysgyfarnógod with the accent moved to the o of nog — I find it very hard to say in the plural, us-guv-arr-nóg-od, but easy in the sing. us-guv-árr-nog. Wonder if Irish shifts the accent as syllables are added to a word.

~~[illegible] any connection with the Latin word scamnum, a ridge [illegible] ysgafn [illegible]~~

All this was about an idea I had that perhaps ysgyfarnog was connected with a Latin word scamnum a ridge or bump of earth, because this Latin word gave in Welsh, ysgafn and means, now a stack of corn, — that sort of thing in a field, and it was used for a bed or couch-like thing. But it also means (as an adjective) light of weight, hence ysgafndroed means light-footed – quick to run. But I suppose it was only the similarity of the sound that made me wonder if there was a connection. And the ~~[illegible]~~ very odd fact that the ~~same~~ word ~~[illegible]~~ ~~the~~ (ysafn from scamnum ridge) ~~[illegible]~~ is used also of lightness & fleetness, because naturally one immediately thinks of a hare's form — precisely a slight rise ~~in or~~ on the ground & the proverbial fleet-footedness of the hare. But it looks as though there aint no connection, ~~[illegible]~~ but only the accidental similarity of sound & the two totally differing meanings of the word in Welsh, i.e. heap of corn as a substantive and bed, and lightness or fleetness as an adjective. That Welsh Dictionary ~~which~~ gives all the etymological connections has only got to the letter 'D' after 13 years, so it won't get to 'Y' until long after we're dead — round about A.D. ~~[illegible]~~ 2,015 unless they buck up. They started in 1950! It's incredible.

I hope you have a happy time with Robin home for Christmas & Rosalind. Give them my love — its incredible to think that another Xmas is upon us — it seems to me as if I was shivering in this room during the last one only yesterday. & its already most infernally cold. When I last wrote had Mrs Watts-Tobin who has done my Income Tax for ~~[illegible]~~ nearly 40 years, died? Her son rang up & told me a little back.

Well, God bless you René, much love to dear Joanna. And if I don't write again before Christmas, my greetings

GLORIA IN ALTISSIMVS
DEO ET IN TERRA PAX
HOMINIBVS BONÆ
VOLVNTATIS

love to Dai